

## Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 /051 W

----- 031347

R 250023Z FEB 75

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2612

INFO AMCONSUL BRISBANE BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

CINCPAC HONOLULU

AMCONSUL PERTH BY POUCH

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE MELBOURNE 0189

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, AS

SUBJECT: ERIC REECE, TASMANIAN LABOR PREMIER, RESIGNS

BUT CHANGES MIND

1. IN SURPRISE MOVE FEBRUARY 24 ERIC REECE, PREMIER OF TASMANIA, AND LONG TIME LABOR PARTY LEADER, ANNOUNCED HIS RESIGNATION FROM OFFICE AND FROM STATE PARLIAMENT. BUT BY END OF DAY REECE CHANGED HIS MIND.

2. CONGEN ROBERT BRAND, ATTENDING ANNUAL STATE LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE IN TASMANIA AS INVITED OBSERVER, TOLD LABATT BY TELEPHONE FROM LAUNCESTON FEB. 24, THAT REECE WAS INCENSED BY "IRRESPONSIBLE CONFERENCE ACTIONS" AT WEEKEND SESSION AND HAD ANNOUNCED PLNS FOR "DRAMATIC ATION" AT STATE CABINET MEETING SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 25.

3. HOWEVER CONFERENCE RAN THROUGH IN SOME CONFUSION FEB. 23, AMENDMENT TO PARTY RULES MAKING RETIREMENT MANDATORY FOR ALL  
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MEMBERS PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY 65 YEARS OR OLDER. REECE,

WHO REACHES 65 IN FIVE MONTHS, REGARDED MOVE AS PERSONAL AFFRONT AND VOLUNTARILY ACCELERATED OWN RETIREMENT.

4. IN SUBSEQUENT ACTION, REECE RECANTED AFTER HIGHLY EMOTIONAL DAY WHEN HIS FIRST ACTION THREW PARTY INTO CONFUSION AND CHAOS, MAKING VERY UNSURE ABILITY OF REECE RIGHT-WING GROUP TO CONTINUE CONTROL OF LABOR PARTY AFFAIRS IN TASMANIA. APPARENTLY REECE WILL REMAIN IN OFFICE FOR INDETERMINATE PERIOD.

5. COMMENT: LABATT AND CONGEN REGARD EVENTS AS TYPICAL ERUPTION WHICH FREQUENTLY MARKS ISLAND'S STATE PARTY POLITICS. NORMALLY PLACID LABOR IN TASMANIA IS PARTY OF EXTREMES WITH MIDDLE-OF-ROAD DANGEROUS PLACE FOR POLITICIANS TO TRAVEL. 65 YEAR OLD RULE HAS BEEN LONG MOOTED BY RIGHT-WING REECE GROUP AS DEVICE TO BE USED AGAINST SUCH AGING LEFT-WINGERS AS FEDERAL SENATE PRESIDENT JUSTION O'BYRNE. IT IS IRONIC THAT REECE IS UNPLANNED AND FIRST VICTIM. ACCORDING TO CONGEN BRAND, CONFERENCE VOTE SHOWS LEFT-WING STILL MINORITY IN STATE LABOR PARTY BUT STILL ABLE TO OUTMANEUVER RIGHT-WING BY SUCH HOARY TACTICS AS INTRODUCING FOGGY ISSUES LATE AT NIGHT WHEN THEY DOMINATE BARE CONFERENCE QUORUMS. LONG SUPPORTER IN FEDERAL CIRCLES OF PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM ON MOST ISSUES EXCEPT STATES' RIGHTS, REECE WOULD BE SORELY MISSED. WITHOUT HIM, LABATT FEELS, ALP WOULD NOT LONG REMAIN IN CONTROL OF STATE GOVERNMENT.  
BRAND

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